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My brave soldie
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HEAD QUARTERS, CAVALRY CORPS,

December 31st, 1864.

My brave Soldiers :

The close of the year terminates a campaign of eight months, during which you have engaged in continuous and successful fighting.

From Dalton to Atlanta you held the right of our army. Opposed almost continuously by a force of infantry ten times your number, you repulsed every assault, inflicting upon the enemy a loss in killed and wounded numerically greater than your entire strength. Every attempt on the part of the enemy to turn or strike our right flank was met and repulsed by your valor and determined courage. It should be a proud reflection to you all, that during the entire campaign, the Army of Tennessee never lost a position by having the flank turned which it was your duty to protect.

During every movement of our lines, you have been between our infantry and the enemy hurling back his exulting advance, and holding his entire army at bay until our troops had quietly prepared to receive and repulse his gigantic assaults. Having failed by other means to drive our army from the position in front of Atlanta, he now sends three heavy columns of cavalry to destroy our communications, to release prisoners of war, and march in triumph with them through our country. You promptly strike one column and drive it back discomfited; then ~~quietly~~ assailing the two others, you defeat them and complete their destruction and capture. This, alone, cost the enemy more than five thousand men, horses, arms and equipments, besides material, colors and cannon. This ~~fact~~ was due to your valor, and is without parallel in the history of this war.

Having been detached and sent to the rear of the enemy you captured his garrisons, destroyed his stores and broke his communications more effectually, and for a larger period than any other cavalry force, however large, has done.

During Sherman's march through Georgia you retarded his advance and defeated his cavalry daily, preventing his spreading over and devastating the country.

During the last five months you have traveled nearly three thousand miles, fighting nearly every day, and always with success. You have been victorious in more than fifty pitched battles, and a hundred minor affairs placing a number of the enemy *hors du combat* fully four times the greatest number you ever carried into action.

I desire, my brave soldiers, to thank you for your gallantry, devotion and good conduct. Every charge I have asked you to make, has been brilliantly executed. Every position I have asked you to hold, has been held until absolutely untenable. Your devotion to your country fills my heart with gratitude. You have done your full duty to your country and to me; and I have tried to do my full duty to you. Circumstances have forced upon you many and great deprivations. You have been deprived of the issues of clothing and many of the comforts and conveniences which other troops have enjoyed and have borne all without a murmur.

Soldiers of Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas and Arkansas! you deserve special commendation for your sacrifices and fortitude. Separated from your homes and families you have nobly done all that gallant devoted men could do. Soldiers from Alabama and Georgia! your homes have nearly all been overrun and destroyed, yet without complaint you have stood to your colors like brave and patriotic men. Your country and your God will one day reward you.

The gallant Kelly whom we all loved so well is dead. Many other brave spirits whose loss we deeply feel sleep with him. They fell—the price of victory.

Allen, Humes, Anderson, Dibrell, Hagan, Crews, Ashby, Harrison and Breckenridge, and many other brave men whose gallantry you have so often witnessed are here still to guide and lead you in battles yet to be fought and victories yet to be won.

Another campaign will soon open in which I only ask you to fight with the same valor I have always seen you exhibit upon the many fields where your determined courage has won victory for our cause.

J. WHEELER,
Major General.

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